

2009 Plants of the Year

The Florida Plants of the Year program celebrates plants ideal for each of Florida's three geographic regions. Each year a selection of Florida's best plants are picked by horticulturists representing Florida's diverse nursery and landscape industry. 2009 marks the 10th anniversary of the program. As a result, the best selections from the past decade have been announced. The 2009 Plants of the Year consists of 10 plants – one representing each year of the program.

Pineapple guava, *Acca sellowiana*, is an evergreen shrub that can grow about 8 feet tall and 12 feet wide. It is cold hardy, salt-tolerant and disease resistant. Its spring flowers have pink and white waxy petals and dark red showy stamens and are edible with a slight pineapple flavor.

Perennial peanut, *Arachis glabrata*, is a drought-tolerant evergreen ground cover. It is best suited for well drained, sunny areas. It bears yellow flowers from late spring through fall. Since this plant can be mowed, it may be used as a replacement for turf.

Autumn fern, *Dryopteris erythrosora*, is a clumping fern with upright foliage reaching 24 inches in height and spread. It is best grown in light shade.

Firebush, *Hamelia patens*, is a heat and sun loving plant. This densely branched perennial will grow about three to four feet tall in the Florida Panhandle. The pointed leaves have pinkish veins and red petioles. It is a tender perennial along our Gulf Coast, freezing back in winter and resprouting each spring. An explosion of scarlet to orange flowers begins in late summer. Individual tubular flowers are about one inch long and are a favorite of butterflies and hummingbirds. Flowers are followed by small, purplish berries that are eaten by a number of birds and other small animals.

Silver saw palmetto, *Serenoa repens*, is a silver form of our native clumping palm. It grows to be about 6 feet wide and tall. It is a cold-hardy, salt-tolerant palm that forms dense thickets in sandy coastal lands but is extremely slow-growing. Its common name is due to the sharp spines along its leaf stalks.

Winged elm, *Ulmus alata*, is a Florida native tree. It has a moderate growth rate and can reach 45 feet tall. Winged elm can be distinguished from other elms by the corky, wing-like growths along the branches.

ZZ plant, *Zamioculcas zamiifolia*, is this year's houseplant selection. This succulent has thick glossy leaflets on semi-erect fronds. It is a tough and handles neglect extremely well, growing in low light conditions with little water.

You can review the plants at <http://www.fnla.org/PlantsOfYear/download/2009-PlantsofYear.pdf>.

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